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# FIFTY YEARS OF LANDSCAPE MODELING

By NATHAN F. BARRETT

*See pages 181 and 182*

AT the age of twenty I commenced my studies in a nursery on Staten Island, associated with my brother Major Barrett. It may be interesting to learn what first attracted me to adopt it as a life work. At the age of sixteen I served on a winter trip to Liverpool before the mast in one of the noted clippers of that day, a ship in the Red Cross Line named "The Escort." "The Dreadnought," that famous clipper, was in the same Line. One trip as a sailor was sufficient, as I reasoned that the captaincy of a ship constituted a limit which was not satisfactory. On leaving the ship I spent the summer at my Staten Island home—boy-like, quite undecided as to my future. My father was engaged with the New York Dyeing and Printing establishment, and owned some thirty acres of land on the heights of Staten Island. Employing a superintendent, he established a nursery and my brother engaged in it. An Irish gardener by the name of Daniel Reagan was in charge of the nursery. Without exception he was the best-educated man of his class that I have ever met, and while I was reading liberally at that time the standard works, I found him remarkably familiar with them. I spent many hours in conversation with Reagan. He told me that he had been second gardener on a large estate near Dublin, and his description was most interesting and instructive.

The art of landscape architecture was but little known in this country at that time. Reagan presented to me the opportunity given to engage in it. A. J. Downing of Newburgh was the first prominent professional in this country. Calvert Vaux was brought to this country by Mr. Downing and, associated with Mr. Frederick Law Olmsted, won the competition for the laying out of Central Park in 1858. These names are household words in this nation. Mr. Downing's publications I view as giving the first organization. Mr. Olmsted of Messrs. Olmsted & Vaux did also large national work.

I entered the Army in 1862 and served until the end of the war, and then entered my life work. From 1866 to 1869 I worked side by side with the gardener Reagan, laying the foundation in a so-called practical way. I recall the first plan that I executed in 1869—a small plot in Bergen Point, New Jersey, some 25 x 100 feet. I was then connected with my brother, and while with him succeeded in influencing the improvements on the New Jersey Central Railroad from New York to Bound Brook, and also the Long Branch Division. This work was from 1871 until 1876. On January 1st 1878 I severed my connection with my brother and since then have been engaged in treating a great variety of work.

In October 1879 Mr. George M. Pullman retained my services to study his ocean front property at Elberon. At the same time I visited Chicago with him and commenced the study of the Town of Pullman. From 1879 until the death of Mr. Pullman in 1899 my relations with him were most intimate. As well known, he was one of the group of men who made history in the commercial development of the land. It is my hope to write his life from my standpoint.

The parrot had abused him liberally, and finally

the Irishman shook his fist and said: "It's nothing but your color saves you." My age and experience entitle me to the defense of the parrot. After having served fifty years almost as a forlorn-hope, endeavoring to show the point of view of the landscape architect, I would say that it is the least known of art professions and the most difficult to make understood.

When I was born in 1845 there was a very limited number of architects in this country, and in fact but very few representing any or all of the arts.

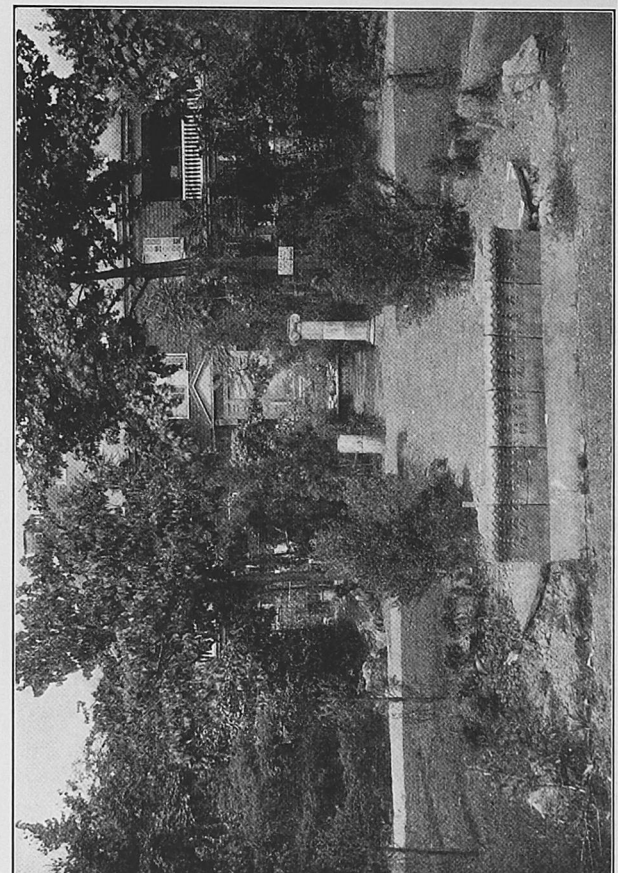
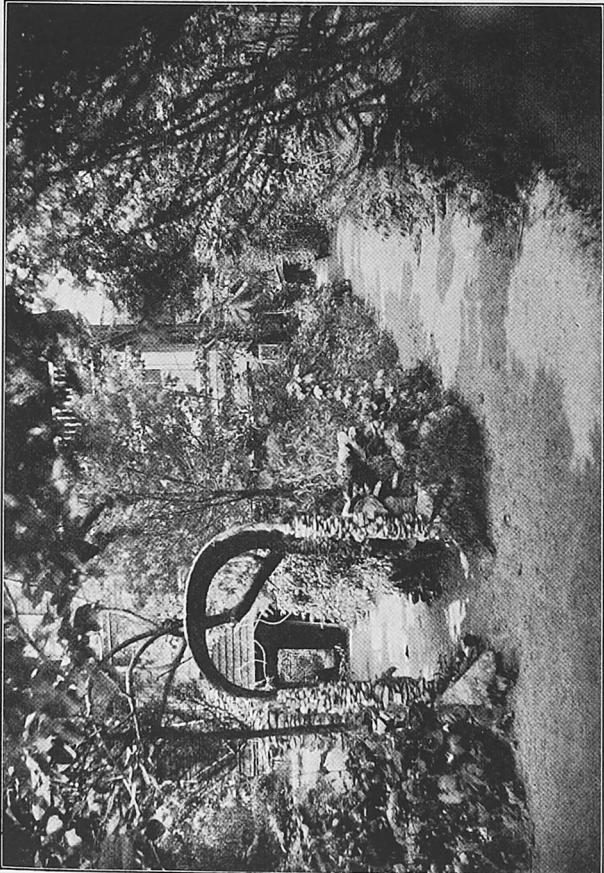
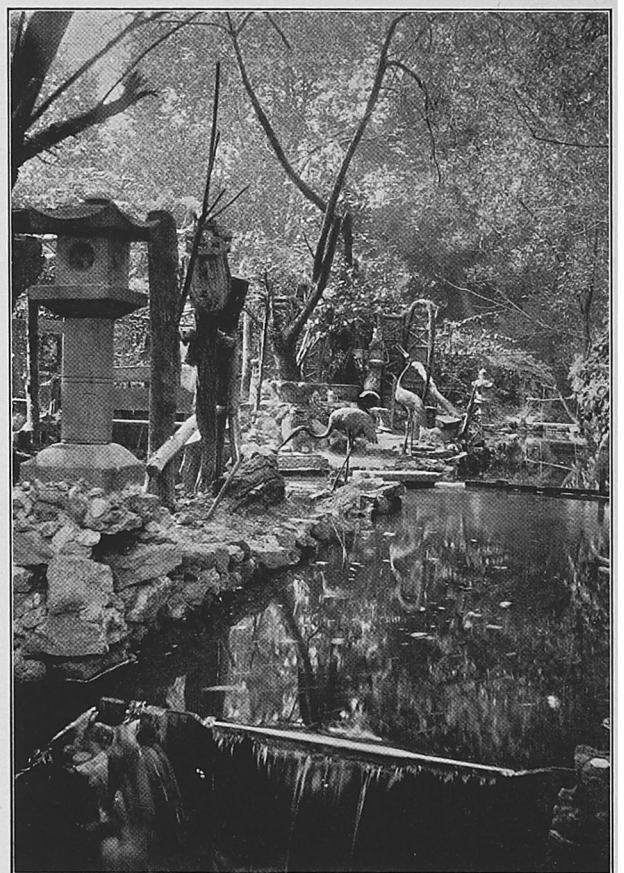
Since then, however, we have well-organized societies, the smallest of which, I believe, is the American Society of Landscape Architects. We have numerous interesting publications, garden scenes, very beautiful catalogues presenting the goods of the nurserymen, florists and gardeners. Take, for instance "Elizabeth and Her German Garden"—a beautiful work written by one who loved the garden and who equally loved the simple life, and yet I view that work as most dangerous in its attitude toward my profession. Elizabeth never found one of my life work to advise her. I would not for one moment discourage any one who turns from their daily occupation to enjoy the development of their landscape, either large or small, yet how can it be expected that a man should devote a life to a pursuit which fails to find a market? The architect, sculptor, painter, musician and others are recognized. Edgar Allan Poe in his "Domain of Arnheim" paid a great compliment to landscape architecture, noting that in all other arts there's limitation as to scale.

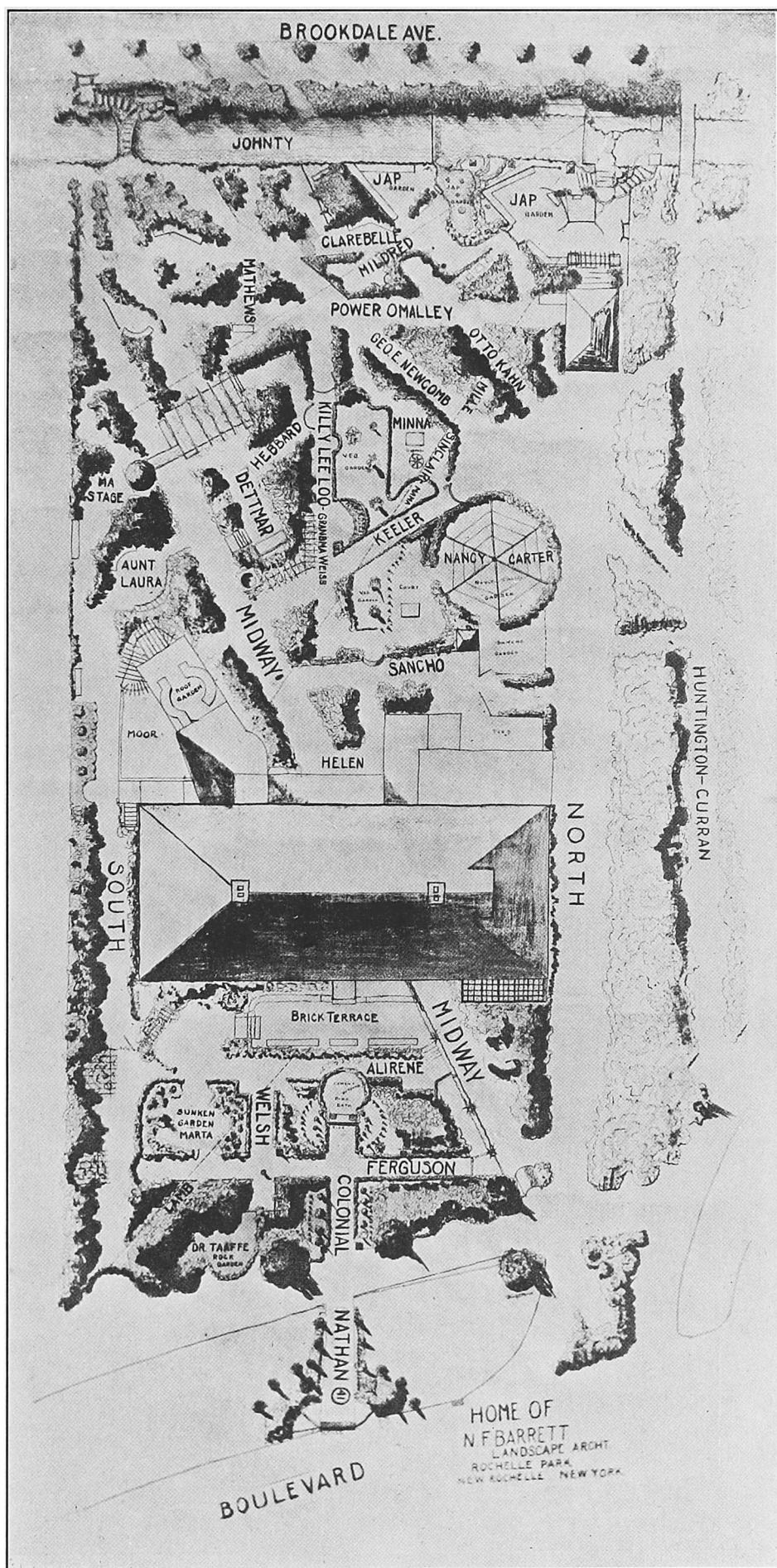
It would be very interesting to know how many of the men of great wealth and prominence have retained the service of the landscape architect.

When we consider the broad metropolitan system of Boston, the Palisade Inter-State Park work, the one hundred and ten miles of Essex County Park system with its miles of boulevards and parkways, the National Parks, and, in fact, the growing appreciation in all the cities of the nation, we may assume that better organization is to follow. The automobile has revolutionized park treatment. The great Forest Reservations also open a broad field, and now that it has been demonstrated that we may go under the sea and through the air, there is no limit to what may be achieved.

The Western cities of our country, made up of the pioneers from the centers of civilization first to be settled, naturally take advantage of the experience of the older communities, and I receive letters asking terms of service. It is not fantastic to prophecy the connection of the different large growing cities of the nation with each other through selected routes for pleasure as well as convenience. The old mountain driver, sitting at the log fireside at night, says to his neighbor: "Bill, I had a crowd of them city folks comin' round the bend in the mountain to-night, and they all hopped up and started to shout." "What was they ashouting about, John?" "Nothing but one of them garl-darned ole yaller and red sunsets."

Eliminate the love of the beautiful from life and you eliminate the water from the watermelon. Any-







thing is great in proportion to our inability to give it expression. There are several poems written of the unexpressed, the very best by Adelaide Proctor as she says, "Poor, indeed, is the love that can find expression." The commonest thing known to human nature is making love. There has never been written a formula and there can never be written a formula. Over the drop curtain of MacVickar's Theatre which burned in Chicago was written "Fiction has in it a higher end than fact."

The use of the word "practical" is very often misapplied and used to conceal ignorance. The practical man is one who has repeatedly tried and worked out a problem until his experience enables him to arrive at a reasonable conclusion. The practical client is one who, especially having plenty of wealth, seeks information from the specialists, expresses his preferences and after exhausting the theories, puts them into practice. One of my practical clients rather ridiculed the idea that I lived by my imagination, and remarked that he thought that a very poor thing to live by. I told him that I might name a great many distinguished men who lived purely by their imagination, yet had lived in history longer than men of large bank accounts, and while they were called upon to forego the luxuries of life, still, they enjoyed a life unknown to the man gorged with overfeeding.

Before the Federation of Women's Clubs at Los Angeles, California, in 1902, while graciously acknowledging their great hospitality, I pointed out that the best friend was one who frankly stated what seemed to be a defect. I refer to the luxuriance of California.

"Miss Fitzhugh, are you fond of bonbons?" "Oh, very, thank you, sir." "Well, William, bring up a wheelbarrow of bonbons and you'll find the tongs in the fireplace."

There must be some standard of superiority, making all due allowance for matter of opinion as over against matter of fact. An old English architect once said: "There is no such thing as a matter of taste; it's either good taste or bad taste. Taste is governed by law. There is, however, such a thing as a matter of preference and human nature seems divided into two classes—those who are exact and formal and those who are picturesque and lovers of nature unadorned." It is my endeavor to classify my clients and then to persuade them to recognize the necessity of using the bitter in order to accentuate the sweet—shall we say the judicious mixture of the salad dressing? A well-rounded character is one who recognizes the value of opposite opinions. The division as applied to my art means the formal gardens and the naturalistic instinct.

The formal gardens are comparatively simple, easy in design and in danger of being made overluxuriant. As a matter of fact they belong quite as much to the architect as to the landscape architect. So many examples exist in the old nations, especially in the Italian gardens, that the temptation is very great to use them, and not always judiciously. This article will not permit the space necessary to give the history of the battle, so to speak, between the two schools of formal and naturalistic. Probably the most distinguished landscape architect, Le Notre, in his work at Vaux and later at Versailles, as in other parts of Europe, gave us an impetus to formal gardens until they were carried to such an extent that

nature unadorned was considered barbarous, and, notably at Levens and Badminton, trees were clipped like a packing or a match box, and all kinds of birds and forms were snipped out of hedges; walls with statuary and vases and iron gates, all beautiful in themselves, seemed to be the only character of design worth the making. It was an age of intolerance. We live in an age of toleration.

Repton of England recalled the broad lawn and forest effects. A feeling of revulsion occurred at this period. This may have influenced Marie Antoinette to introduce at Versailles the English garden—back to nature, so to speak—with her dairy-maids and other features keenly picturesque! The Palace of Versailles and later the Grand Trianon and the Petit Trianon would seem to indicate the transition from the formal and luxuriant to the natural or simple life.

The great wealth of our nation naturally seeks outlet in reproducing the formal gardens of Europe. I am perfectly willing to concede that they belong quite as much to the profession of architecture as to the art I represent. I pride myself in never having attempted to design any serious structure that I considered belonged to the architect. There is a character of design, however, that cannot be specified. I refer to the rock gardens and other expressions that, as I view it, would prove injurious to the building architect. The landscape is so elastic that, excepting the large trees, many changes are admissible, while a building, comparatively, fails to admit of serious changes.

Architects very well know that publications are now appearing which claim that every man may be his own architect. *The Ladies' Home Journal* and other publications are giving us some very interesting sketches. The women's clubs are also deeply interested in civic development; and properly so, yet, as I have said before, it cannot be reduced to an exact science owing to differences of climatic conditions, the points of the compass and many other reasons requiring expert opinion.

The attitude of the client is of vital importance, and a division of the art is interesting. We may hope for a time when cities will be laid out in their entirety. The old cities will receive up-to-date attention in the suburbs. Here we have the neighborhood parks, notably Llewellyn Park, Orange, N. J. (about 1858), Tuxedo, Chevy Chase, Washington, D. C., Roland Park, Baltimore, the beautiful suburbs of Boston and Philadelphia—in fact, communities and in some instances streets treated by private contribution, plus the regular civic taxes.

Rochelle Park, New Rochelle, commenced in 1885, represents one of the most complete resident parks. The management has been in the hands of the residents, a well-organized board, the services of the officers given gratis. An exact history of this park would prove interesting. Space will not permit other than a hasty reference to it. Half-acre plots on a formal avenue of one hundred feet in width, and curvilinear drives, express the two schools of landscape art. The lot owners represented people of limited means. The management has been, therefore, careful and exact. I laid out the Park, and have lived in it since 1888. The changes in the Board of Governors have been numerous in that period. My design has been ruined, but a very little expense would correct the error. A hedge has been

erected to conceal the broad effect; the open lawn has been adopted. An Australian gentleman who visited me deemed it barbarous to be able to see a man's lawn, while, as he viewed it, hedges and walls with proper openings would have given the essential privacy and suggested beauty.

My own half-acre represents the only work in my experience that I have controlled. A division of the art previously referred to embraces the *ferme ornée* or ornamental farm, the large private estates, as well as the small, the park treatment of cities, the connecting boulevards of cities, also referred to. I have been engaged in all these different treatments throughout the land, from Maine to California, and in almost every State of the Union, a different study being required among the rugged hills of New England and the semi-tropical character of California and Florida.

I am at present making a study for the Paulist Fathers at St. Paul's College, Washington. This is rather an unusual study for me, if I may except the study for St. Elizabeth Academy at Convent, New Jersey. It has been my privilege to serve as a Commissioner for fifteen years of the Palisades Inter-State Park, and I am now retained as designer, so that I have been, to state it playfully, both boss and bossed!

I will close my article by an attempt to describe my garden. How can I express it? Has any painter been called upon to reduce to plan, specification and detail exactly how he mixes his color upon the palette and applies it to the canvas? Has any violinist been called upon to exactly express where he places his finger upon a string? Has any poet or musician been called upon to express the rhyme and sounds he has heard? As with a cup of black coffee and my pipe and my little red dog, I watch the sun rise, peace in the clover-scented fields, studying exactly the rays of the sun to give the light and heat necessary to the little plants and flowers that bloom for my joy, can I be expected to specify exactly my feeling in an atmosphere so sensuous? The still calm undisturbed even by the snore of my neighbors, with the birds taking their bath in my brook, with the catbird as near to me as he dare to come (I wish he would come nearer), giving his imitation of the mocking bird, the beautiful little birds chirping and twittering about me—the passion of the gambler is the only expression that I can find—vistas innumerable!

The razor-back hog of the South, seen end on, might seem very narrow, seen sideways, comparatively large; and yet these vistas must be so concealed as not to be apparent. The suggestive in art, the trimming of trees, topiary, the training, pleaching or modeling of trees, the weeds and the mosses and the ferns dripping with dew, the odors of the garden, which "Elizabeth" so charmingly recognizes, the mint, the thyme, the rosemary, the lavender, the wild carrot, the evening primrose, the ailanthus, the paulonia, the polygonum, all weaving together; the walks in gravel (not the cold, dull, materialistic cement), the garden wall. . . . It may be an impression from childhood. Old Colonel Barrett of Concord, Massachusetts, after whom I am named, his direct ancestor having commanded the first fight at Concord, was the type of the gentleman with beautiful white hair, soft felt hat and lisle-thread gloves, a gold-headed cane in one hand and

in the other his little nephew, a toddling boy, myself, being towed up and down his garden walks—the big wall and flower pots and fruit trees, trained espalier—all this may have sown the seed in my heart of a passion for which I am thankful, which no bank account can replace, serving out my life until the end.

In 1900 the *New York Herald* called this garden of mine the most beautiful half-acre in the world. Mr. T. W. White, who wrote the article, said that he was perfectly responsible for that expression. My contention is that it is the best expression that I have given to the intimate relation between a house and a landscape. It is something more than a garden. Two-thirds of the cellar is given over to an extension—my "wet-day garden"! In the spring I remove the windows of the cellar, put them away and protect them. The practical man exposes them to the atmosphere. The sunlight pours in on marble and small-stone tiles and seas of the same material. It is indeed a garden for stormy days. The longest distance in a parallelogram is the diagonal, and so from the curb a garden path passes under the house a distance which has been guessed as four hundred and fifty feet, when, as a matter of fact, it is only two hundred and twenty-nine. In the cellar also we have a Pompeian room, a very good representation of a bit from Pompeii.

In this room is a model of Bear Mountain on the Hudson 20 feet to the inch vertical and horizontal. It shows the playgrounds and the Inn and Highland Lake, 152 feet higher than the river and 1,200 feet from the Hudson, a broad playground and the rise of the mountain to 700 feet on the axis of the dock by the waterside, and rising to 1,314 feet to the top of the mountain—all this to accurate scale, the mountain in canvas and the rest in earth and plaster.

I have submitted to the Palisade Commission a scheme for pipe water sheen display. The force is given by the above-mentioned lake, some half-mile in length and a quarter of a mile in width and sixty feet in depth, a scheme giving opportunity for one of the most economical, effective water displays in the world. One of the prominent Commissioners, a man of large nature and national reputation, assures me that when the foundation work is complete, as he terms it, meaning the miles of drives through the thousands of acres of land owned by the Commission six miles south of West Point, then this scheme will be carried out. These Commissioners are not only distinguished men in their own lines of life, but are dictating to me what park designs should be!

Leaving the Pompeian room we enter the German room. In this I have some of the plaster of Bissel, the "Lycurgus," which decorates the Appellate Court Building on Madison Square, New York, pieces by Herbert Adams, some of the work of Philip Martiny, also an old Franklin fireplace, a German chair, a candelabrum of bone, part of the skeleton of some animal—and I am free to confess that I am as wicked as Andrew Carnegie, who believes that a little Scotch whiskey is not a bad thing for an old man; so, on certain occasions (too far apart to please me) I gather the amateur toppers and give them some beer, all of which is very wicked! Out in the garden we have a little of the Moorish as an extension to the house, above that a tea-house and above that a roof-garden. We also have a shower bath, which might

be decorated and made into a Roman bath. We have a gazebo and summer-house, and down by the brook an American-Japanese garden (which, by the way, tends to prove that only a Jap can make a Japanese garden), although, having made other attempts, I endeavor in the color of worm-eaten wood and split willow and in bamboo fences and Japanese ornaments, generously furnished by Vantine, to give expression to Japanese designs. The brook plays its part, and here I am endeavoring to demonstrate to the Palisade Commission what I can do with a normal supply from a four-inch pipe in order to produce the beautiful effect of sheens and waterfalls.

Here is a plan which shows the numerous vistas, the drying paddock, the little dog's garden and other features. Between the curb and the front of the house an attempt is made to show the value of topiary, pleaching, small sunken gardens filled with poppy roses, so suggestive of the old lady with sun-bonnet and gauntlets and trowel. The access through the front door is an attempt to increase distance by the relation of objects; a foreground of planting at the curb and vanishing lines forming the perspective and terminating with a very good example of a

Colonial doorway designed by the architect of my house, Mr. Charles E. Jacques. Mr. Ruckstuhl contributed in plaster his originals of the two pieces, "Wisdom" and Force," which decorate the entrance to the Appellate Court Building in New York. A brick terrace suggestive of the Colonial homes on the James, Virginia, is at the front door, supplied with liberal seats. The building faces southeast and this terrace is in the shade in the afternoon and enjoyable.

In conclusion I would state that this cellar garden and all that pertains under the cover of the roof of the house belong really to the architect, and I have simply attempted to show the intimate relation existing between a house and its surroundings.

I welcome the young women and young men and their seniors, who have not grown too old to be taught something, to come and study with me, my ambition being (which is not wholly selfish) to convey by all in my power to these young people the gospel of the existence of a distinct art; then when they marry or otherwise, and possess for themselves country homes large or small, they will know that landscape architects exist.

Nathan Franklin Barrett

## ART IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

By GEORGE E. BISSELL

*See page 187*

WE are the foremost nation in the world in the Mechanical Arts, Commercialism and all that goes to make a nation great in material things, for all of which we are indebted to the genius of our institutions which first of all fosters and encourages the freest individualism. The power and willingness to push and the satisfaction to be derived from pushing in all directions are ours; we are past masters in the art of "getting there with both feet," to use a slang phrase. But in developing in this direction we have ridden rough shod over some of the amenities which go so far to make life an agreeable function.

As a people we are somewhat brusque, and it is difficult for us to get on without more or less friction. Nations with infinitely less natural and acquired intelligence are masters of the art of agreeable intercourse, among whom that irritating friction which does so much to make life a burden is reduced to the minimum. Politeness and consideration seem to be an inborn characteristic of some European nations, notably those in which art is a factor, entering largely into the details of material things.

Public and private buildings in those countries are richly decorated without and within. All public utilities are designed on agreeable lines and, whichever way we turn, we are met by harmonious combinations. Nature and art go hand in hand through the length and breadth of those staid old commonwealths, and the people, in daily contact with such agreeable surroundings, are unconsciously molded along similar lines and act in harmony with these outward conditions. An additional and doubtless greater factor in this problem of social intercourse, consists of the Churches, in which are to

be found the masterpieces of the greatest artists in color and form. In the presence of these sublime conceptions, the multitudes worship daily from babyhood to decrepit age; they revel in all that art can give to the absorbing mind; daily contact with the beautiful quietly molds the character and creates unerring taste, not only in things artistic but in the proprieties of life. Rough and uncouth in exterior many of these people doubtless are, but they seldom err in the amenities which let us go through life so easily and without friction.

From the contemplation of the harmonious conditions existing in the Old World, sometimes called an effete civilization, let us turn to our own very fresh, crude and in many ways exasperating conditions, as we find them in the greatest American cities. A most serious problem is presented to the people of this city:—its *betterment* in the direction of all that has made some European capitals so delightful, and so well worth living in.

Our first efforts must be the amelioration of incongruous conditions, the checking of tendencies towards the bizarre, meretricious and ugly disfigurements which are a constant *irritant* to people who have nerves, and who should be brought in contact with *counter-irritants*, things harmonious and quieting only. We cannot set ourselves right along these lines in our usual rush-way of doing things; we have been too long a time getting into this condition for that sort of treatment. We have to begin at the bottom and build on the sure foundation of the education of the Masses, and the starting point is the slums, the lowest social strata. In other words a vigorous, healthy art sentiment must have its foundation in the Masses instead of the educated Minority. With the latter, art is more or less a